

Guest Column: Updates from the rural economic development front

Guest column by Tehama County/ Supervisor Bob Williams, Dist. 4 | Posted: Wednesday, February 14, 2018 6:34 pm

In the last edition of my column, I referred a lot to the phrase “never a dull moment.” The year 2017 certainly provided plenty of excitement for me in my role as Tehama County supervisor and as the 2017 chairman of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC).

As we begin 2018, I look forward to another challenging yet rewarding year, serving the people of Tehama County and working to provide a better quality of life for our citizens.

With each day comes new challenges and discoveries for me and our Tehama County Economic Development team. I use the term “challenges,” because we can all see the promise that our beautiful county has to offer future employers and businesses, yet have to continually ask ourselves, “How do we get there from here?” I think that many of the “discoveries” that we have made and continue to make can help to guide our path towards progress in providing a thriving business economy and higher wage jobs for our county community. Allow me to touch on just a few.

As the Tehama County representative for RCRC, I get to work with some very dedicated professionals in the RCRC Economic Development team. These folks are committed to helping all of rural California seek its full potential in the areas of job creation and economic growth.

With unemployment considerably higher in rural California than in the more urbanized areas of the state, many rural counties have been faced with the same nagging question of the “how.” The Economic Development staff at RCRC has been doing the research and necessary legwork to find ways to help fund rural infrastructure, including broadband.

The recent appointment of former RCRC Chair and Colusa County Supervisor Kim Dolbow Vann to the position of state director for USDA-Rural Development should help tremendously in this area. Director Vann is committed to finding ways to help rural areas achieve their full potential and provide opportunities for residents of rural California.

Another group that I have the pleasure to work with is the 3Core Regional Economic Development Strategy Committee. This committee, made up of business professionals, educators, elected officials and city and county staffs from Butte, Tehama and Glenn counties is looking at various ways for business, education and local government to work together and help our local economies thrive. A recent discovery of this group has been the PG&E “Business Expansion Incentive Program” which, under certain circumstances, can provide lower cost electricity to businesses locating and/or expanding in California. This is something that is definitely worth looking into.

On the county level, our economic development team of Caylyn Wright and Amanda Jenkins continue to work on several fronts to discover new opportunities for local business expansion, creation, and development. Working with myself and Supervisor Steve Chamblin on our local Tehama County Jobs

Development Committee, they are researching areas of industry that would be a good fit for Tehama County, how to provide wayfinding signs to businesses that are located more than 10 miles from a state highway, placing a guide to civic amenities and events on our website, zoning and permitting for wedding and event venues, and creating an economic development blog, just to name a few. If you have a business in Tehama County, you may be hearing from these ladies soon, as they also continue conducting interviews with local businesses to find out if there is any way that we can help you succeed and grow.

While 2018 looks to be a year full of challenges, my hope is that it will also be a year of discoveries that will help our county prosper. I feel that we have the right people in place, are making the right connections on the state and federal level, and I'm looking forward to the opportunities that may present themselves in the coming year.